

We claim:

1. A process for preparing acid formates in which
 - 5 - a liquid stream I comprising formic acid and
 - a liquid stream II comprising a metal formate

are prepared,
the liquid streams I and II are fed to a rectification column in such a manner
that a higher or identical feed point to the rectification column is chosen for
10 the liquid stream II than for the liquid stream I,
the liquid streams I and II are mixed in the rectification column, with water
being removed overhead from the rectification column and
a bottoms stream comprising the acid formate is taken off from the rectifi-
cation column,
15 which comprises the bottoms stream being produced as melt comprising
less than 0.5% by weight of water.

- 2. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the content of liquid stream I of
formic acid is at least 85% by weight.
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- 3. A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the content of liquid stream I of
formic acid is at least 94% by weight, preferably at least 99% by weight.
- 4. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the liquid streams I
25 and II are aqueous streams.
- 5. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the bottoms stream
comprises less than 0.3% by weight of water, preferably between 0.2 and
0.1% by weight of water, particularly preferably from 0.1 to 0.05% by
30 weight of water.
- 6. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the bottom tempera-
ture in the rectification column is limited to a value below 135°C.

7. A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the bottom temperature in the rectification column is limited to a value below 125°C.
8. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the feed point for the liquid stream II is chosen on or above the uppermost separation stage of the rectification column.
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9. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the ratio of the liquid streams II and I is chosen in such a manner that the molar ratio of metal formate from the liquid stream II and formic acid from the liquid stream I is in the range from 0.95 to 1.05, preferably 1.
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10. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the rectification column is fitted with separating internals of low pressure drop, preferably with ordered packings.
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11. A process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the number of theoretical plates of the rectification column is chosen from 5 to 15.
- 20 12. The use of the acid formates prepared in a process as claimed in one of claims 1 to 11 for preserving and/or acidifying plant and/or animal materials, for treating biowastes, or as additive in animal nutrition and/or as growth promoter for animals.